

MS and Vaccines

A Review

For more information about vaccination, don't hesitate to contact your neighbourhood or regional CLSC.

Specialized travel vaccination clinics:
publichealth.gc.ca.

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Did you know that people with multiple sclerosis (MS) are urged to keep their vaccination records up to date? Even if you were vaccinated before adulthood, you might need boosters. Your booster injection could also be an opportunity for you to get vaccines that weren't available when you were last vaccinated, plus others that are now recommended for you because of your health condition.

Why get vaccinated?

Vaccination is the best tool for protecting you against certain diseases and preventing the associated risks and complications. It helps your body to manufacture antibodies against viruses and bacteria so that your immune system is better prepared to react if it's exposed to these pathogens.

In the context of MS, treatments known as "immunomodulators" have been available for about 20 years. In general, they target certain aspects of the inflammatory response with the aim of reducing the frequency of attacks and slowing the progression of the disease. For close to a decade, "immunosuppressive" treatments have also been used; these treatments can weaken the immune system, making it harder to fight off certain diseases. If you are planning to start one of these treatments, you should have your vaccinations beforehand, since some vaccines can't be administered to someone receiving immunosuppressive treatment.

How to proceed?

Even if you have lost your vaccination record, you can seek help from a vaccinator. This health professional will work with you to determine which vaccines you should receive according to the Quebec immunization protocol, which is the authority for vaccination in our province. Some vaccines are offered free of charge under the Quebec Immunization Program, but others must be paid for. The vaccinator can inform you of these charges.

Are there risks associated to vaccination?

The risks associated with vaccines must be assessed in relation to the benefits they provide, namely the ability to prevent certain diseases and their complications. In most cases, the benefits of vaccination are considered to outweigh the potential risks. However, since no medical procedure is entirely safe or effective for everyone, it is important to note that vaccines are not completely free of adverse effects. Still, we must emphasize that these effects are usually minor and temporary and represent the body's normal reactions. Before administering the vaccines you might need, the vaccinator can tell you about their possible side-effects. To date, no causal relationship has been established between vaccination and MS.